

## 2007 Chairman's Award Entry

### CHANGING THE MINDSET

What we needed to do to get FIRST going was to break the stereotype mindset given to kids of what is important to our culture" (Dean Kamen). Team 578's purpose is to change the stereotypical mindset of our community and students regarding science and technology. FIRST was created for the students, and our team is driven by our students, while at the same time being strongly supported by our mentors and sponsors. Our passion, our drive, is working for the future so that America has a future.

### COMMUNITY IMPACT: SPREADING THE MESSAGE OF FIRST

Blue Lightning underwent major strides this year to impact our community and the world with the message of FIRST. As missionaries for FIRST, our team spread the message with our award winning website. Our website has reached more than 20 countries world wide, including our own U.S. government. Our top ten ranking website, [www.fairportfirst.com](http://www.fairportfirst.com), has over 75,000 hits exposing people to FIRST's message and its importance in America's future. Our website has proven to be the most effective form of media for spreading the message of FIRST. Our members have advertised this website extensively through all forms of media, at every opportunity. Reaching out to our community, 1200 residents were presented with the message of FIRST through our team's involvement in Robotmania, hosted by Rochester Museum of Science and Technology. Young minds were mesmerized by our team's robot demo and presentation of the competitions. Innovatively sparking the community's interest in science and technology, our march in Fairport's Fourth of July and Homecoming parades provided an avenue for the team to increase community awareness of FIRST. FACT 12 & FACT 15 (local news stations) made our drenched yet high spirited team the center of attention when we made our way down main street in a wet 4th of July parade.

Blue Lightning inspires middle school students to pursue engineering by mentoring Lego League Team 3185 Blue Sparks. Involved students eagerly anticipate the day they will become Blue Lightning members. Enthusiasm for engineering is spreading into elementary schools after our demonstration for a local Cub Scout troupe.

Impacting the community means serving the community, something Blue Lightning takes to heart. Exemplifying this is our community service at Rotary Club's Canal Days Antique Sale and "Make a Difference Day" where team members carved pumpkins with senior citizens. The Democrat and Chronicle's "Our Towns" section as well as the Perinton Post have featured our team multiple times. Our team's drive to open the eyes of our school's 1800 alumni inspired us to create an engineering "Careers Night." Prestigious engineers from various fields will present their careers in our school's auditorium and address the importance of engineering in America's future. We hope this will help people see what is truly important in our culture.

### STUDENT IMPACT: MENTORS INSPIRE GROWTH AND CONFIDENCE

Blue Lightning has a lasting impact on the lives of its team members. We have steered the majority of our students into fields of engineering, and all of our members into college. Being involved in FIRST set a direction for their careers and many have come back to mentor our team. FIRST's ideal mentors give members a priceless opportunity to work side by side with an experienced professional and learn the process of professional quality engineering.

Our team's success is because of our mentors touching the lives of our students. Joining the team for her first year, a hesitant freshman's ideas were materialized and brought into fruition by the team's main mentor. She is now a very vocal sophomore and states that the team mentors have given her the confidence and skills to vocalize her ideas and see them happen. Blue Lightning's mentors teach students to problem-solve on their own and be self-sufficient in getting tasks accomplished. The team's mentors have guided its members into becoming confident, knowledgeable engineers.

Our student energy and drive makes Blue Lightning truly unique. Our impact on the community has not only impacted the community but it has impacted our students. Our student leaders have coordinated every event we've done to impact the community. Our student involvement in the website, Lego League, the Rah Cha Cha Ruckus, Robotmania, the Cub Scout demo and Fairport's parades were all initiated, coordinated, and carried out by the student leaders and members. Our students were given the chance to take charge, under mentor direction, in making a difference in our community. The students realized that they could do significant things themselves. This made them realize that they could reach whatever goals they set for their lives.

#### ROLE MODEL: CHANGES AND RELATIONSHIPS TO EMULATE

We've changed our mindset in order to change the mindsets of others in our community and beyond. We've made the transition from a seasonal robotics club to a year-round FIRST team. We have a stronger focus on community and on student outreach. We are sustaining last year's efforts to be a student driven team guided by mentors. Our greatest strength is the balance between mentor guidance and student steering. Our mentors will watch the members struggle with a problem until the member asks for help. The mentor then explains the validity of a student's idea without simply shooting down the poor ideas and accepting the valid ones. The mentor will give an analysis and ask the student what he or she thinks should be done based on the information given. Our mindset is not just learning about engineering, but learning how to work with a group and about group dynamics. This skill can be transferred to any field.

We are also making efforts to reach out and assist other FIRST teams. Web design assistance was offered to team 330 over Chief Delphi's forum. We've covered for other teams at local FIRST demonstrations when those teams were unable to attend. We helped plan and coordinate a preseason FIRST competition called the Rah Cha Cha Ruckus with team 1511, Rolling Thunder.

Our team's build season success would be nothing without The Gleason Works. In addition to substantial funding, The Gleason Works has made available its machinery, engineers, and a space for our team to work. For 8 years they have continued to show this consistent support. This strong relationship with a corporate sponsor is something all teams should strive for.

#### OUR MISSION: CHANGING THE MINDSET OF AMERICA

Our activities alone are not what makes this unique team a team to be emulated. It is our passion and drive that gives our students the inspiration to make a difference in the world. As a balanced, mentor-guided, and

student-driven team, our team has many mentors willing to give countless hours to work side by side with students. The strides made this year by the team have improved the team's involvement in the community two-fold. Our team's energy to be student-driven has excited members with their new found initiative under mentor guidance to manage team activities. We don't focus on how far we've come over 10 years, instead we look to the future, keeping in mind the changes that we make each year. We are excited to realize that we are climbing the ladder to become National Chairman's Award winning material. Being part of such a giving team has made the experience for members one of the most rewarding things they've done. Our team name, Blue Lightning, was inspired by the team's energy, drive, and passion to further the message of FIRST. Who's got the power? We've got the power to change the mindset of America, one aspiring mind at a time."